IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A magnetic bearing element comprising:

an annular permanent magnet divided in a circumferential direction thereof at at least one location to form a radially extending slit, the radially extending slit defined by opposing faces of the magnet; and

an annular binding band surrounding and exerting a preloading force on said annular permanent magnet,

wherein the opposing faces of the magnet are not in contact with each other.

Claim 2 (cancelled).

3. (currently amended) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 1, wherein the permanent magnet is divided in a circumferential direction thereof at multiple locations to form multiple radially ~~extend~~ extending slits and a plurality of space apart segments and the plurality of spaced apart segments are not in contact with adjacent segments.

4. (previously presented) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 3, wherein the locations are distributed regularly around a periphery of the permanent magnet.

5. (previously presented) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 1, wherein the bearing element comprises multiple permanent magnets arranged concentrically with one another, all of which are divided at at least one location and spaced apart there.

6. (previously presented) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 5, wherein the radially extending slit of one of the multiple permanent magnets is offset from the radially extending slot fo another one of the multiple permanent magnets in the circumferential direction.

7. (previously presented) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 1, wherein the annular band is made from carbon-fiber material.

8. (new) A magnetic bearing clement comprising:

a hub;

an annular magnet mounted on said hub and divided in a circumferential direction in at least one location to form a radially extending slit defined by opposing faces of the magnet; and

an annular binding band surrounding said annular magnet and exerting an inwardly directed radial force thereon for preloading said annular magnet,

wherein the opposing faces of the annular magnet are not in contact with each other.

9. (new) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 9, wherein the permanent magnet is divided in a circumferential direction thereof at multiple locations to form multiple radially extending slits and a plurality of space apart segments and the plurality of spaced apart segments are not in contact with adjacent segments.

10. (new) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 10, wherein the locations are distributed regularly around a periphery of the permanent magnet.

11. (new) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 9, wherein the bearing element comprises multiple permanent magnets arranged concentrically with one another, all of which are divided at at least one location and spaced apart there.

12. (new) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 12, wherein the radially extending slit of one of the multiple permanent magnets is offset from the radially extending slot fo another one of the multiple permanent magnets in the circumferential direction.

13. (new) The magnetic bearing element according to claim 9, wherein the annular band is made from carbon-fiber material.